

TRAFFIC ADVISORY BOARD
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
MARCH 17, 2009

	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	
MEMBERS:													APPOINTED BY:
Ian Martinez	P	P	P	E	**	P	P	E	*	P	E	E	Donald D. Slesnick, II
Larry D. Kries	P	P	P	P	**	P	E	P	*	P	P	P	Maria Anderson
Douglas Yoder	P	P	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	E	P	P	Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Frank Quesada	P	A	E	P	**	E	P	P	*	P	E	P	William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Christopher Morrison	P	E	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	P	P	P	Wayne "Chip" Withers
Bertram Goldsmith, Jr.	E	P	P	P	**	P	P	P	*	P	P	P	Commission-as-a-Whole
Ramon Irigoyen	A	A	E	P	**	A	P	P	*	P	E	P	City Manager

(*) Board voted not to hold a meeting due to holiday vacations

(**) Board meeting cancelled due to threatening hurricane

A - Absent
E - Excused
P - Present

Staff

R. Alberto Delgado, P.E., Public Works Director
Lt. Agustin Diaz, Police Department
Mirtha Francomacaro, PW Central Division

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. Mr. Morrison informed the Board Members there would be a second meeting at 6:30 p.m., following the Traffic Advisory Board business meeting, downstairs in the theater. The meeting would be between the City's Parking Director and residents who live just west of the Bacardi Building to discuss implementation of a Residential Parking Program. Mr. Morrison noted he would not be attending however Alberto Delgado would be and he suggested that Larry Kries, as Zone 2 Representative, should attend the meeting if he was able to do so. Anyone else who wished to attend was welcome also.

Copies of the February 17th Minutes were distributed to the Members.

A motion was made by Mr. Kries, seconded by Chico Goldsmith, to approve the minutes as corrected.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

De Soto Fountain Roundabout: Mr. Delgado shared the conceptual design that had been prepared by David Plummer & Associates, Inc., and paid by the MPO, with the Members. There is \$200,000.00 designated from the Miami-Dade County's Road Impact Fees towards this project. Public Works can do the design in-house. Mr. Delgado discussed the cost of this project noting all the work involved: drainage, lighting, resurfacing the streets, etc.

Mr. Goldsmith asked Mr. Delgado if we get a complete break-down of what the job is going to cost and Mr. Delgado informed him that we always get a break-down of the work to be performed and what the cost is going to be.

Mr. Delgado noted that due to the current economic situation we will be able to get more contractors to bid on the individual jobs.

Mr. Morrison looking at the design noted that it appeared that motorists would be able to enter Palermo Avenue from the De Soto roundabout, but unable enter the roundabout from Palermo. Mr. Delgado explained that this would require a lot of public meetings since we are changing some streets. The movements on some streets would no longer be allowed and he cited Sevilla Avenue as another example. If you are coming eastbound on Sevilla you will not be able to enter into the De Soto Boulevard roundabout either.

Mr. Delgado further explained eastbound traffic on Sevilla and westbound traffic on Palermo would both be forced to return to De Soto. Because of the design, the only movement permitted was for these drivers to return to De Soto Boulevard. Mr. Delgado noted that Public Works would prefer a redesign that would permit two-way traffic. Otherwise, we would have to get all the neighbors to concur with the proposed changes. The Members discussed proposed change in movements at the De Soto Roundabout.

Mr. Kries noted that De Soto and Sevilla almost come together, although they do not. But, you have vehicles coming together and entering the circle at the same time vs. Granada where you do not have that. To Mr. Goldsmith's questioned if there was a circle there now. Mr. Kries noted that is the location of the fountain. The intersection has this enormous paved area and drivers go straight as they possibly can. That is what is happening during rush hour. "It's fantastic to watch... amazing in fact."

Mr. Morrison asked if the circle at Cartagena Plaza was being redesigned in like fashion. Mr. Delgado noted no, that is not what we are planning to do. In that case we are keeping the two existing lanes. Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that he was at the County recently and the County is re-designing the circle. He hopes to be able to bring the information to the next meeting to share with the Board Members. He further explained that the intent of the County's design is to protect the parking on the northeast side of the parking and but prevent cars leaving the parking area to pull out directly into the circle. The County is keeping both lanes because of the volume of traffic in that area.

Mr. Goldsmith asked if the Bridge was going to be widened at the same time and Mr. Delgado noted that they bridge is not going to be widened. They are going to install a new adjacent "foot" bridge east of the existing bridge for bicycles.

With regard to the De Soto Roundabout, Mr. Martinez asked if there was anyway we could get Historic Preservation funding because of the historic nature of the fountain. Mr. Delgado said that

we had tried that, but to no avail. He further explained that the funding we received was for remodeling the fountain, only.

Mr. Delgado further explained that since this is a capacity improvement project, we probably will be able to get Road Impact Fees, but these funds are slow in coming.

Mr. Kries asked Mr. Delgado (although he thought that Mr. Delgado would not know) if we would be able to get any Federal stimulus money. Mr. Delgado explained that he had attended a couple of meetings with the MPO at Miami-Dade County. Most of the money that the City will be getting will be transportation funding. According to the formula, Miami-Dade County is going to get about \$110,000,000.00 and that amount will be distributed to the various cities based on population. It is probable that City of Miami is going to get a good chunk of that. Coral Gables will probably get \$1,500,000.00. We still do not know for sure if this is the way the money will be distributed. There are rumors that the County will take the major part of it and only leave \$65,000,000.00 for the municipalities, in which case Coral Gables will only get about \$800,000.00. He further noted that the City could install some traffic calming devices with that money. Mr. Morrison asked when we may see these funds and asked if there was a move afoot to make sure that the County does not sit on the moneys. Mr. Delgado noted that we will probably see our share of the money by this summer.

The projects that are ready to go and that we can probably do are the projects that are funded by the Impact Fees, for example the Biltmore and Segovia Roundabout and the Segovia Median. They can be done quickly with Impact Fees funding. Mr. Delgado also noted that whether we get \$800,000.00 or \$1,500,000.00 we are going to be "happy." That will do a lot for the projects that we have ready to go.

Transportation is the main item. Others stimulus money could be used for improvements to facilities, and water and sewer (ex. the force main lift stations that we had some problems with that a while ago), but the big money is for transportation.

Returning to the discussion of the De Soto Roundabout, Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that we are going to review plans because if we make Sevilla one way, we need to go to the Community. The residents on Sevilla will probably be very happy, however, the residents on the other streets will not be happy.

Dr. Yoder commented that they probably have counts as to how many cars are coming from which direction, so presumably this design was formed taking that into consideration.

Mr. Morrison asked how many residents in the condos actually drive to the end of Sevilla to get to the circle on a daily basis. Mr. Delgado noted that a lot of drivers use Sevilla, which goes all the way to Red Road. Board Members discussed the traffic on Sevilla, the traffic in the morning and afternoon rush hours caused by the School and the Church.

Mr. Delgado will discuss our concerns regarding Sevilla with David Plummer & Associates, Inc... Someone sent an e-mail complaining about the project (Roberto Saco, who lives by Anderson and Coral Way). His e-mail said that we completed Segovia at Coral Way out of turn as the circle at Anderson and Coral Way had been requested beforehand. But, Mr. Delgado explained to him that Public Works had been working on the Segovia Circle Project for over three years. In fact, this project was discussed by this Board at one of our first meetings, and that Anderson/Coral Way is a fairly new project. The one at Biltmore and Segovia we have been working on for about five years.

The speed tables for Madrugá, which the County has approved, were discussed. Mr. Delgado reminded the Members that the street had been reduced in width years ago to accommodate development along the street; however, there have been many complaints about speeding, hence the proposal to add speed tables.

Mr. Goldsmith noted that we need to come up with a solution, sometime, about Lugo. Mr. Delgado noted that the County would not allow speed tables. Mr. Goldsmith noted that he knows we can put a circle on the east side of the Bridge, that would be okay, but there is no room on the west side of the circle and further down Lugo we should put something in the middle of the road.

Miracle Mile: This item went before the City Commission because it needed their approval. The consultant presented their study for Miracle Mile and Giralda. Then the Commission wanted to address the issue of the angle parking/parallel parking. The meeting was attended by Mr. Morrison who informed the Commission that he was simply representing himself, not the Board.

Mr. Delgado explained that the idea was to get feedback on how the people felt about the parking. The bottom line was “Where is the money?” This is a very expensive project.

Mr. Morrison: “Miracle Mile is not only our Main Street but it is also State Road 972. He pulled traffic counts for the intersection of Miracle Mile and Douglas Road and discovered the count exceeds 45,000 cars a day. The count at Miracle Mile and Le Jeune Road is 46,500. That is a tremendous amount of traffic and I can just imagine how parallel parking might impact rush hour.

I looked at a study on angle vs. parallel parking regarding the time it takes to park. Angle parking, going in and going out, takes an average of 11 to 12 seconds. Whereas parallel parking takes 21 seconds, if you know what you are doing! And, some people don't. Alberto explained to me that the parallel parking spaces that will remain are to be 25 feet instead of 20 feet. And also the spaces will have extra width which will allow you to open the door of your car. But, I am still not convinced. I think that is a tremendous amount of traffic and I think we should look at an alternate route for eastbound traffic to get around Miracle Mile to avoid potential gridlock during the afternoon rush. Westbound in the morning is not a problem because you have Andalusia which is one-way eastbound and most of the shops on Miracle Mile are not open at 10 o'clock in the morning. So, morning traffic is not the issue.

Right now the only option you have to avoid Miracle Mile westbound on Coral Way, is to get in the left hand lane on Coral Way to turn south on Douglas Road for two streets and then west on

Valencia Avenue. Valencia is one way westbound all the way across to Le Jeune. But then, you have to figure your way back to Coral Way to continue westbound. Going southwest is fine, but if you are going west it is not really the answer. The only other option to Coral Way is to go through residential neighborhoods.

So my first thought was to make Aragon Avenue one-way westbound. But, Alberto pointed out to me that it is an issue for the Colonnade Hotel as their parking is east of the Hotel. So I am thinking instead, Aragon should be three lanes (two lanes westbound, one lane eastbound) from Merrick Way to Ponce de Leon Blvd. What would be done west of Ponce remains to be looked at, possibly all lanes one-way westbound, but I think that works. That way, as you enter Coral Gables from Coral Way, you will have the option of getting into the right hand lane to enter Merrick Way. Do you follow me? And, then you can immediately turn left and get on Aragon, Aragon goes all the way thru to Le Jeune where there is a light. So by changing the signal timing and changing lanes around a little bit I think it would offer a lot of relief to Miracle Mile and make the parallel parking plan more feasible.”

Mr. Delgado explained that in 1995, when improvements to the east/west corridor were last made, it was suggested to make Andalusia one-way eastbound and Aragon one-way westbound.

Mr. Morrison asked Mr. Delgado that if the Board considered this a viable option, would we be able to have the consultant at least do a conceptual study so that we could send it off to the Commission.

Mr. Delgado: Yes. But, he noted the problem with the Hotel’s drop-off and the parking to the east.

Mr. Morrison: “My suggestion is that there would be three lanes so that access for the hotel would not be an issue. However, you would lose parking on the north side of the street to accommodate an additional westbound lane. I believe between Galiano and Merrick Way already we have parking on the south side of Aragon with no parking on the north side. Right?”

Mr. Delgado said that section could be one way. The only consideration would be the Hotel.

Mr. Morrison asked the Board Members if they were in favor of taking a look at this and asking Mr. Delgado to have the consultant do the study.

Mr. Goldsmith moved to have our consultant prepare a conceptual study for making Aragon Avenue one way westbound, but to allow for one lane of eastbound to accommodate the Colonnade Hotel. The object would be to provide relief for Miracle Mile should the parallel parking plan be adopted. The completed study would be sent to the Commission for their consideration. Seconded by Mr. Kries. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Delgado explained that the City had previously tried to make changes to the intersection of Andalusia and Douglas Road, in the area where Rex Art Store used to be located, because of the traffic jam that occurs during rush hour. But, the County did not agree. He further noted that the area has many apartments and is more commercial in nature.

Mr. Goldsmith asked if the valet parking company would continue to operate on Miracle Mile if the proposed plan is approved. Mr. Delgado said yes.

Mr. Kries noted that the idea of having a central valet parking station is not all bad, but they stack the right hand side as they move cars in and out of the parking spaces. Mr. Goldsmith remarked that is part of the problem. How to fix that, Mr. Kries continued, I don't know. Unless you move them to a side street and then you have a problem on Ponce.

Mr. Kries noted that conceptually speaking he likes the idea of widening the sidewalks. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Morrison noted that the County approved the parallel parking, which amazes him because it is basically, as he said before, a State Road and there is a lot of traffic that goes east and west every afternoon.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that the State did not want to keep the angle parking when the City installed the Median. So, that section of Miracle Mile is now local. Mr. Morrison asked if the State Road 972 stops at Douglas.

Mr. Delgado: "You have the section of Coral Way east of Le Jeune is a State road. The section between Douglas Road and Le Jeune Road, Miracle Mile per say, was a State Road. Coral Way west of Le Jeune is County road. Mr. Morrison: Was that section ever a State Road? Mr. Delgado, No, County.

Mr. Morrison noted that another good result if his suggestion were adapted would be that it would help feed the City's garages on Aragon Avenue.

Mr. Goldsmith noted that some of the circles have stop signs and some others have yield signs. Can we get them all to be yield signs at some point in our lives? Mr. Delgado noted that intersections that had the four-way stops keep the four-way stops after the installation.

Mr. Goldsmith said it would be preferable to have all yield signs. Mr. Morrison agreed that it would be consistent for enforcement purposes and help educate drivers as how to negotiate traffic circles. Also, he noted some drivers are blowing through the traffic circles with stop signs. Mr. Delgado noted that those signs are only on the "little" circles, not on the roundabouts. On Hernando and Salzedo they have stop signs.

Mr. Kries recommended we do not remove the stop sign at the Hernando circle until that circle is widened. Hernando/Almeria.

Discussion continued on the signs. Public Works is to look into installing uniform yield signs.

Mr. Kries suggested making North Greenway and South Greenway one-way streets and adding a dedicated bike lane. He noted that at dusk the bikers, walkers, joggers and cars are all trying to go

in both directions. It is very dangerous. Mr. Delgado explained that making those streets one way presents a problem for the residents. Living on a one-way street is very inconvenient. When you need to get home if you live on North Greenway in order to get home you have to go around the block to Alhambra Circle which has a median. If you live on South Greenway, in order to get home you have to use Coral Way with its busy traffic. In the afternoon it would be OK. Not so in the mornings. Mr. Morrison suggested dropping the speed limit to 25 MPH like we did on South Alhambra.

Mr. Kries also inquired if there is any room on the golf course side for another lane. Mr. Delgado explained that the people who jog there do so at their own risk because of the golfers and golf balls. Discussion ensued on various ideas and suggestions made in the past for the golf course.

Talk then turned to the Country Club and the firm who will be taking it over. Mr. Morrison noted that it is a Canadian firm who is taking it over. He thought it was supposed to open in September and asked Mr. Delgado if that had been delayed a bit. He further noted that at their presentation before the review committee they stated they are planning to offer summer memberships for residents to use the pool and the exercise room. The club would be open to everyone, but membership fees would be charged. The existing members or former members are going to be able to get some of their money back by receiving discounts on food and beverage for ten years. Basically, the Country Club is going to become a catering operation, but the restaurant will be open to the public. The Company is pretty interesting. They run a lot of projects in Toronto, historical sites they have been turned around and are now doing well. Even though they were the only qualified applicant, they seem to be perfect fit from what he saw. Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that the City will make the necessary inside improvements and repairs.

Mr. Morrison reviewed the chart of proposed projects which shows the estimated completion times that had been prepared by Esther Zabalo as he had requested. He noted that as usual, most projects have been scheduled for work and completion during the summer.

Dr. Yoder asked about the rejection of bids for the Blue Road Projects. Mr. Delgado informed him that probably will be March before the City can make a determination on that issue. Public Works will re-bid it again probably in May. Dr. Yoder noted that he did not know why this is taking so long and Mr. Delgado explained that it has to do with Procurement and other issues.

Mr. Morrison noted that everything on Esther's project list in white remain on the "To Do List."

Dr. Yoder asked where the request came from for the two streets crossing Santa Maria? There is no way the traffic on that street justify traffic circles. Mr. Morrison noted that he did not want to see something on the list from a previous year that was not a well thought out and justified project and then have a resident complaining we have not done anything. If it is not a good idea, he continued, we should send the consultant and the Board can decide to cancel the project and then take it out of the list. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Morrison: “This is the same thing I said last time about Mariposa Avenue. A resident there wants a circle on Mariposa one block from Granada. I go that way all the time to go to the gym at University Center. You cannot even reach 25 MPH in that two block stretch. A circle is absolutely not warranted and I would like to see it off the list. I really would. If necessary, a two-way or four-way stop sign could be added at that intersection. We certainly do not want to spend money on a circle, when that money can be better spent elsewhere.”

Mr. Morrison asked Mr. Kries that if before we adjourn the meeting he would like to make a motion to take a look at the Greenways and make it a project to see if we can reduce the speed.

Mr. Kries: “I do not have an answer, but yes, something needs to be done. It has been an issue for a long time. Mr. Kries moved that a safety study be conducted to see how South Greenway and North Greenway joggers, cyclists and speed issues could be addressed. Mr. Goldsmith seconded. Passed unanimously.

Updates: None.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.